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Memorandum of Conversation

Approved: M. R. Murphy
9/23/59

DATE: September 17, 1959

SUBJECT: Khrushchev's Visit to the United States and Related Matters

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Wilhelm G. Grewe, German Ambassador
Mr. Rolf F. Pauls, Counselor, German Embassy
Mr. Robert Murphy, Under Secretary for Political Affairs
Mr. Martin J. Hillenbrand - GER

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Ambassador Bonn
(for Ambassador Bruce)
Ambassador Moscow
(for Charge)

After an initial exchange on the Soviet moon shoot, Mr. Murphy said that the visit of Khrushchev to the United States was in the nature of an experiment. We did not know what its historical effect would be, and perhaps it might be proved that we were wrong in inviting him. However, nothing had so far happened to indicate that this would be the case. The visit up to now had come off pretty much as expected. One point of some interest, Mr. Murphy continued, was Khrushchev's alacrity in bringing along his family. We had at first not thought about inviting them during the original discussions with Menzhikov. When the suggestion was later made, Khrushchev agreed and brought not only his wife but also his two daughters, a son, and a son-in-law. We had the impression that Mrs. Khrushchev generally had a good influence on her husband. She seemed well disposed and was studying American history and English. However, Mr. Murphy had the impression that the son-in-law, who is editor of Izvestia, was an ardent and completely committed Communist.

Ambassador Grewe commented that the first two days of the visit seemed to have run off satisfactorily from the Western point of view. The public reception was appropriate, and Khrushchev's performance yesterday at the Press Club presumably gave a fairly adequate impression of him. Mr. Murphy added that he had been told that the Soviet interpreter did not literally translate everything which Khrushchev had said (apparently he had a certain latitude to use his own judgment in modifying statements). Ambassador Grewe noted in this

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connection that Khrushchev's reference at the airport to "our common enemy in World War II - Germany" had been translated without specific mention of Germany.

Mr. Murphy said that, in their initial conversation, Khrushchev and the President had touched on Germany and Berlin in general as subjects for future discussion. There was no indication of any change in position. There would be no fixed agenda for the Camp David conversations, but the two heads of governments would go over the whole gamut of problems. The emphasis would be on informality, and all that was attempted by the Secretary and Gromyko yesterday was an enumeration of topics together with their possible sequence.

In their initial conversation, the President had said with respect to Berlin that our position was that we had assumed certain responsibilities after World War II. While the present situation was admittedly abnormal, until the United States could discharge its responsibilities to the German people it could not accept unilateral action on the part of another party. The United States could not abandon its responsibilities until an acceptable settlement had been achieved.

To this Khrushchev had responded, according to Mr. Murphy, that the Soviets had not raised the issue of Berlin as such but rather the question of a peace treaty to end the state of war with Germany. The achievement of such a peace settlement would settle the Berlin problem. He would want to discuss this in detail with the President, and it would be good if they could work out some common language recognizing the existence of two German states rather than attempting to bring about a socialist or capitalist solution by force. If one speaks of sympathies, Khrushchev continued, each knew where the sympathies of the other party were. It would be well to recognize the facts. This would not mean juridical recognition of the GDR, but recognition of the state of fact that actually exists. The Soviets do not contemplate unilateral action, Khrushchev added, although he accused the United States of taking unilateral action in Japan affecting Soviet interests. However, the problem of ending the effects of World War II had to be solved after fourteen years. If they tried hard enough he was certain that the two countries could find a way out which would not involve a loss of prestige.

In response to Ambassador Grewe's query as to whether we had obtained the impression that Khrushchev would make specific proposals on Berlin, Mr. Murphy said he did not know, that Khrushchev had so far had nothing new on the subject. Ambassador Grewe asked whether any indication had been received as to whether the Soviets would emphasize other problems than Germany and Berlin. Mr. Murphy said that disarmament and nuclear testing seemed to be important to the Soviets. We would want to talk to them about the Far East, especially Laos, Tibet, and Indian frontier questions. We had told them this. We would like to do a little probing, for example, relative to Sino-Soviet relations about which no one knows very much. Khrushchev will presumably raise the question of United States bases and our alliances throughout the world. We will take the position that no change is possible on these until

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actions are taken which would create confidence in the situation. The President will be prepared to give him a little history lesson as to the causes of our policy such as the Berlin blockade and the Korean War.

In response to Ambassador Grewe's question, Mr. Murphy said that the Soviets seemed to have brought along a considerable number of experts - over twenty from various ministries. The entire party was a large one numbering about seventy, although Menshikov had originally talked in terms of twenty. However, we could not draw conclusions, as Grewe had implied, regarding special Soviet interests from the composition of the experts who had come. The omission of military people on their part was obviously intentional. We had offered to let Khrushchev see some of our bases but he was not interested. The element of reciprocity with respect to the President's return visit was obviously involved. As to this latter point, the President was holding the date of such a return trip in suspense. His personal guess, Mr. Murphy added, was that because of various commitments in terms of visiting heads of governments (Italian, Mexican and Guinean), the visit would not take place, in any event, before November. The winter climate was a problem but the intensive cold in the Soviet Union came only in December. With reference to visits to countries other than the Soviet Union, Mr. Murphy continued, the great problem was that as soon as one country was suggested, a dozen other countries immediately took the position that if they were not visited too it would bring about a political crisis.

Mr. Murphy asked Ambassador Grewe whether, since the end of the Geneva Conference, he or the German Government had developed any new ideas on the subject of Berlin. The Ambassador commented that, in the case of Berlin, it was difficult to find any new ideas. In response to Mr. Murphy's question as to whether he thought the Soviets had started the Berlin crisis last November because of East German or Polish pressures, Ambassador Grewe said that nobody really knew, but he, personally, did not believe that East German pressure was sufficiently important in itself to cause a crisis of the kind which had developed. He thought that the primary consideration for the Soviets was the usefulness of Berlin in forcing favorable developments elsewhere. After all, Khrushchev's visit to the United States was one such by-product, from the Soviet point of view. Moreover, if such effects could not be achieved in other areas, Soviet interests in any event dictated a change in the Berlin situation itself.

Mr. Murphy indicated that, at one point, some people had thought that Polish pressure had had something to do with the Soviet action, but this, he had been told, was probably not the case. Ambassador Grewe said he likewise believed this unlikely. While the Poles wanted the Oder-Neisse line accepted, they opposed a separate peace treaty with the GDR which would exclude for a lengthy period any possibility of recognition of the Oder-Neisse line by the Federal Republic. In response to Mr. Murphy's question as to the attitude of the Federal Republic now on the Oder-Neisse line and frontier question, Ambassador Grewe stated that the Federal Republic would make further efforts to improve its relations with Poland. This might not involve any immediate

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establishment of full diplomatic relations. However, any change in the Federal Republic's position on the Oder-Neisse line in the near future was unlikely, both for internal political reasons and because it would be unwise to recognize a definitive boundary before negotiations on East-West issues had started. Until then, there would be no occasion for adequate counter-concessions by the Soviets, especially on German reunification and Berlin. In response to Mr. Murphy's question, Ambassador Grewe said that the average West German does not accept the Oder-Neisse line as a fact but he is not particularly ardent in protesting against it. The refugee groups were the best organized lobby in the Federal Republic. Their leaders, however, had very obscure concepts and were not very realistic in their objective. Mr. Murphy noted that his information was that the Poles had moved into the "eastern territories" in substantial numbers, about 5 to 6 million. Ambassador Grewe said that this was the case, but that they had not been able to fill up all the gaps or completely to restore a normal situation, particularly in Pomerania.

Ambassador Grewe asked whether the United States envisaged private talks taking place at Camp David between the President and Khrushchev. Mr. Murphy said that the talks would be on a very restricted basis, with perhaps four or five participating on each side. If specialized subjects came up, the experts could be brought in within a relatively short time. The attempt would be made to have the talks on as intimate a basis as possible. Mr. Murphy added that he hoped Ambassador Grewe would assure his Government that there would be no plan on the part of the United States to make any concessions. Ambassador Grewe commented that he had noted no signs of nervousness in Bonn. He hoped this condition would continue, and that there would not be alarming press reports to change the atmosphere. Mr. Murphy observed that some 1,200 correspondents were now accredited to follow the trip in one way or another. The press situation should be easier to control at Camp David. One aspect of the situation, of course, was how the Soviets would handle their own press. In response to Ambassador Grewe's request that arrangements be made for prompt transmission of information to the German Embassy during the Camp David talks, Mr. Murphy said that we would do our best. He honestly did not look for any complete reversal or change of attitudes. The results of the talks would have to be allowed time to seep in. Perhaps when the President made his return trip, if he did, more would be possible.

Ambassador Grewe said that the danger, as he saw it, was that public opinion in the United States might be affected by Khrushchev's reiteration of the peace theme and his campaign against the Federal Republic. He said he had noted a somewhat greater disposition in this country to listen to references to the World War II alliance than before. Perhaps the public was becoming somewhat bored by the difficulties of the German problem. Mr. Murphy commented that he had not noted such a tendency, and, in fact, public opinion polls seemed to show the contrary. In any event, the Department did not feel itself to be under public pressure to make concessions. What effect Khrushchev was having on public opinion we did not, of course, yet know.

In response

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In response to Ambassador Grewe's question as to what he thought the impact of the talks might be on a possible summit meeting, Mr. Murphy said that the President continues to maintain that a formal summit meeting must be justified by some prospect of real progress to avoid possible subsequent disillusionment. He would make this clear to Khrushchev.

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